John Chandleghis Book

1778

THE Nature & Causes OF HARDNESS OF HEART,

Together with the

Remedies against it,

Discovered in a SERMON, Preached first before the Honourable Society of *Lincolns-Inn*, and afterwards before the *University* in Great St. *MARIES* Church in

CAMBRIDGE.

By *Robert Neville*, B.D. Rector of *Ansty*.

Entered according to Order.

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To the Worſhipful my much Honoured Friend,

Colonel Richard Goulſton,

OF

WIDDIAL-HALL Eſq;

One of his Majeſty's Deputy-Lieutenants & Juſtices of Peace for the County of

HERTFORD.

Honoured Sir,

I *Had no long Debate within my ſelf, whoſe* Name *I ſhould borrow to Patronize this Diſcourſe, when I conſidered it had been delivered in Two Great and Judicious Auditories, one of the Honourable* Inns of Courts, *and the moſt Ancient and Learned* Univerſity *of the Nation: My Thoughts preſently faſtned upon Colonel* Goulſton *(a Perſon who hath ſuckt much Excellent Learning from the Breaſts of both* Univerſities, *and been refined and poliſhed by an* Inns of Court *Education) as the beſt qualified to do me ſuch an Honour: And though it ſeems little leſs than a Libelling your Judgment, to publiſh my Hopes of its owning ſo Mean and Sorry a Pamphlet; yet I have preſumed to give you the Trouble of this Addreſs, not from any Opinion I have of the Value of what I preſent to you; but becauſe*

the Honour, and Happineſs, of ſome years Neighbourhood. and Converſation, have given me a more than ordinary Aſſurance, that your Candor *and* Charity *will be ready to Pardon the Faults, and Umbrage the many Imperfections of it.*

Were I inclin'd to put off the Divine, and put on the Courtier, I could (as ſome have done in Addreſſes *of this Nature) croſs the Seas, and Rifle Foreign Countries, for* Diamonds & Rvbies, *to* Set *in, and enrich your* Name, *and Exalt and Imbelliſh your* Virtues *with High and ſtrained* Hyperboles: *But my own plain and honeſt Temper hath made me a faithful Friend to Truth, and an inveterate Enemy to Paint and Varniſh; nor do I here ſo much pretend to draw a curious Picture of your Virtues, as to give you a rude Draught of my grateful Reſentments of thoſe many Neighbourly Kindneſſes you have heaped upon,*

Honoured Sir,

Anſty, Novemb. 29. 1682.

Your moſt Faithful and Humble Servant,

R. Neville.

A

SERMON

Preached

Before, both the Honourable Society

OF

LINCOLN's-INN,

And the *University* at

Great St. *MARIES* CHURCH

IN

CAMBRIDGE.

Hebr. 3. part of the 15th Verse.

Harden Not Your Hearts.

THough we are in the hand of a skilful Artificer, that of the knottieſt and crookedeſt Timber, can make Beams and Rafters for his own Houſe;

Houſe; that can ſquare the Marble and Flint, as well as the Free-ſtone: And though the Sunſhine of Divine Grace can melt and thaw the Ice, of the moſt congealed hardned Heart, and God can turn men *extempore* into Saints by his Omnipotent Convincing Spirit: yet if we obſerve the more Ordinary Courſe of God's Proceedings, we ſhall find that there is a Peculiar Temper of Mind, which is moſt agreeable to the receiving of Chriſt; which thoſe that are Owners of, are ſaid to be εὐθετοι εἰς τὴν Βασιλειαν τῦ θεῦ, Fit or diſpoſed for the Kingdom of God: They muſt have that peculiar Temper, wherein the Goſpel will take root, and proſper, namely, an Humble, Flexible and Soft Heart: whereas on the other ſide, there is * *AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF*, and * *A REPROBATE* Mind; and * *A HARD HEART*, * *HARDENED THROUGH THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN*, againſt which St. *Paul* gives us this neceſſary Caution here in my Text, ſaying, *HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.*

* Luc. 9. 62.

* Heb. 3. 12.

* 2 Cor. 13. 5.

* Heb. 3. 13.

From which words I ſhall endeavour to ſhew you theſe Four things:

Firſt, How and when Man Hardens his own Heart.

Secondly, How, and when God, without any impeachment to his Juſtice, may be ſaid to Harden the Heart.

Thirdly, What are the Properties of a Hard Heart.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, By What means we may avoid this Hardneſs, this Obduration, And

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew you, How, and When, Man Hardens his own Heart: For the more perfect diſcovery whereof I muſt acquaint you with three ſorts of Hardneſs:

Firſt, A Natural Hardneſs, the Hardneſs of our Natural Inclination, which was Born with us.

Secondly, A Voluntary Hardneſs, A Hardneſs acquired by our own Reſolutions and Endeavours.

Thirdly, A Penal, A Judicial Hardneſs.

Firſt, A Natural Hardneſs, or the Hardneſs of our Natural Inclination, which was Born with us.

Phyſicians tell us of a diſeaſe converting the Womb into a Hard Stone; and the Story in *Crollius* of Λιθοπαιδίων; A Child of a perfect ſtony Subſtance, is aſſerted by others: and ſuch Children are we by Nature, Children of a perfect ſtony Subſtance, of ſtony Hearts: There grows A hard Pearl in the Underſtanding, the Eye of Our Souls, which makes us almoſt Blind.

The Soul of the Natural man is ſo ſtupified by Obduration, that it meaſures all Divine Truths by the Standard of Senſe and Reaſon: The Eye of his Soul looking downward, ſees clear enough, but if it looks up to the Sun of Righteouſneſs, 'tis preſently dazled: We are Naturally Eagle-Ey'd in Worldly things; Mole-Ey'd in Heavenly, in Spiritual things.

The

The Will of a meer Natural man (before the Grace of God Emancipates and sets it free, and makes it capable of any good impression) is obstinate, and impenetrable: We may as easily pierce a Rock, or dissolve a Flint, as prevail upon it, when 'tis overgrown with that Crust of Natural Hardness; which oftentimes is improved and increased by the Addition of a Voluntary and Acquired Hardness; which brings me to the Second kind of Hardness; and that is,

Secondly, A Voluntary Hardness, A Hardness acquired by our own Resolutions and Endeavours; A Wilful Hardness; when men have wilfully persisted in long continued Habits of many sins, which (like gravel after long continuance in the Bladder) Cake into a Stone, and make their hearts hard and obdurate. They have enslaved themselves by a strong Habit of Obduration, they are bored through the Ear, and are resolvedly bent not to change their Servile and Slavish condition.

The Cords of Sin, with which they have bound themselves, are of their own twisting, and those Cords are twisted into so strong a Habit, that they are not easily broken; and when men have brought themselves into these Circumstances, they are almost under a fatal Necessity of committing Sin:

* Dr. *Tillotson's* Sermon on *Heb.* 3. 13. *pag.* 13.

I do not believe (saith a * Reverend Author) *that God hath Predestinated any man to ruine. But by a long Course of Wilful Sins, men may* (*in a manner*) *Predestinate themselves to it, and*

Choose

Choose wickedness so long, till at last it becomes Necessary; and continue to be bad men upon the same account, that the Historian *Extravagantly saith* Cato *was Vertuous,* (*) BECAUSE HE COULD NOT BE OTHERWISE *being bound in the chains of their own wickedness, nay, like* Sampson, *not only bound by those lusts which they have embraced, but likewise, robbed of all their strength, whereby they should break loose from those Bonds.* And this brings me to the Third kind of Hardness I named to you, and that is.

Quia aliter esse non potuit, vellei: Pateri.

Thirdly, A Judicial, a Penal Hardness; when men are hardned by God by way of punishment for hardning themselves; their Voluntary Hardness proves the mother of their Penal Hardness; as you may see in the 12*th* of St. *John*, 39, 40. Therefore THEY COULD NOT BELIEVE, BECAUSE THAT *ISAIAH* SAID, HE HATH BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND HARDNED THEIR HEARTS, THAT THEY SHOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, NOR UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS, AND BE CONVERTED. It is as St. *Augustin* observes (a) SIN IS BOTH THE PUNISHMENT & CAUSE OF SIN; which happens when the Soul is so overspread with the Contagion of Sin, that all Spiritual food corrupts within it; which God perceiving, withdraws the wholsom food of his Grace he did before allow it; He with-holds those Beams which before kept the heart soft and pliant, and thereby it is congealed and frozen; God being justly provoked withdraws his Grace, and leaves us to our selves; and though Satan tempts us to Obduration, yet neither God nor Satan, do real-

(*) *Peccatum est pœna peccati & causa peccati.*

ly, or effectually, produce this Hardneſs in us, we breed it in our ſelves; as ill diet may occaſion the *ſtone* in the Bladder but it is the inward diſtemper of the body, that immediately breeds it: For, the further Illuſtration whereof, I ſhall, as I promiſed, endeavour to ſhew you,

SECONDLY; How & when God, without any impeachment to his Juſtice, may be ſaid to Harden Mans Heart; and Firſt, God may be ſaid to Harden men, when he withdraws his grace, becauſe men have firſt Hardened their hearts againſt it: It being free for God to take the forfeiture of his grace and mercy, when, and how far, he pleaſes: For although that Help of General Grace allowed to all, be, if rightly improved, ſufficient to ſtrengthen and Convert the Soul, and to emancipate and make the Will Free: Yet if we forfeit our Indentures by the abuſe of our Liberty, and neglect the Grace of God, when offered to us, he then may moſt juſtly withdraw it from us, and take away the Patent our Wills had for the Priviledge of their Freedom: To which purpoſe 'tis generally obſerved by Divines, that there is to every Sinner a time, when the meaſure of his iniquity is filled up, and Gods Patience in waiting for him is ſo wearied, that he withdraws his grace, and gives over calling him to Repentance; this was wont to be called by the *Jews* THE MEASURE OF JUDGMENT; *i. e.* ſuch a pitch of Sin, which Judgment inevitably followed: And it is poſſible, that to Obdurate Sinners ſuch a time may be, which

may

may be their laſt for grace, though not their laſt for life: That they may live here, and yet be dead eternally: and that a time may be when * THERE WILL REMAIN NO MORE SACRIFICE FOR SIN, but Sinners are Sealed up to Obduration, when God in Juſtice ſtrikes them dead, who would not live, and conſigns them to Damnation who were before reſolved to Damn themſelves. And St. *Baſil hath aſſerted Gods Juſtice in this Caſe, by affirming that God, though he hardens mens hearts, yet he is not the Author of Sin: But that Sin is* † OF MANS OWN CHOICE, *not Originally and primarily from God, or by any Poſitive Act of Gods upon him; of which he gives us a lively inſtance in* Pharaoh *whom God found hardned; he did not make him So.* And, if you read the ſtory, and obſerve the method of Gods Proceedings with *Pharaoh*, you ſhall find *Exod.* 8. 15. 32. that *Pharaoh* HARDNED HIS OWN HEART: And when after ſo many miraculous Judgments, He was not reformed, then tis ſaid, in a new ſtile, *Exod.* 9. 10. & 10. 27. That the LORD HARDNED PHARAOHS HEART: But there is one Objection, that ſeems to interfere with this Doctrine, which I muſt remove, and then I'le ſhake hands with this Particular.

* Heb. 10. 26.

† τῆς ἑαυτῦ προαιρέσεως.

The *OBJECTION IS THIS.*

Did not God tell *Moſes* at firſt, before ever we read that *Pharaoh* paved his Heart with Obdura-

tion, that he would Harden him? Did not God say to *Moses*, Exod. 4. 21. DO ALL THE WONDERS BEFORE *PHAROAH*, WHICH I HAVE PUT INTO THINE HAND, BUT I WILL HARDEN HIS HEART, THAT HE SHALL NOT LET THE PEOPLE GO: Now these words of God, I WILL HARDEN HIS HEART, are recorded before we have any news of *Pharaoh*'s Hardning himself.

To which I Answer,

That Gods foretelling so early, that he would Harden *Pharaoh*'s heart, is no argument, that he would do it immediately, and without any Demerit of *Pharaoh*'s; but that God, foreseeing and foreknowing, that *Pharaoh* would lay the first stone of his Obduration, and first harden himself, said thereupon, *I WILL HARDEN HIS HEART*: Now that God foresaw *Pharaoh*'s hardning himself is clear and evident from *Exod*. 3. 19. *AND I AM SURE THAT THE KING OF ÆGYPT WILL NOT LET YOU GO, NO NOT BY A MIGHTY HAND*: So that if you carefully peruse the History of *Pharaoh*'s life and actions, you will find that God did not Harden him, till he had hardned himself six times against Gods heavy Judgments: Which was a notable Example of Gods dealings with an Obdurate Sinner, that hath filled up the measure of his Sins, keeping him alive, but without Grace, without Repentance.

SECONDLY, God may be said to harden men (without any impeachment to his Justice) by presenting occasions, which Sinners, through their own innate Corruption, make instrumental to their Obduration

duration; but this can reflect no diſhonour upon God, nor blemiſh his Juſtice, becauſe theſe occaſions are not deſigned by God to DECOY any into Sin, but are good in themſelves: Light (though good and pleaſant in it ſelf) yet it hurts Sore Eyes: What is there ſo good, that obdurate Sinners will not abuſe?

Pharaoh was Hardned by Miracles, by which another man's Heart would have been mollified: the Hardned Sinner (like the *Spider*) ſucks poyſon out of every thing: He ſucks poyſon from that, which was deſigned as an Antidote for him: To this purpoſe 'tis ſaid *Jer.* 6. 21. *I WILL LAY STUMBLING BLOCKS BEFORE THIS PEOPLE*; that is, ſuch Occaſions and Providences, as through their own wilfull obdurateneſs are a means to ruin them: It being Ordinary in *Scripture to aſcribe an Act to God*, whereof he gives the Occaſion; An Example of this may be *Shimei's* Curſing *David*, which he told *Abiſhai* in 2 *Sam.* 16. 11. *that the Lord bid him do*: But how did the Lord bid him? He gave him no outward Command, neither did he move him to it by any internal impulſe; for, if God had done either, He had been the Author of *Shimei's* Curſing, and *Shimei* had been blameleſs: What other meaning then can theſe words (*THE LORD HAD BIDDEN HIM*) be capable of but this? namely, that God did preſent the Occaſion, in letting *Shimei* ſee

ſee *David*, in that Affliction ſpoken of in the 12th *verſe*, and with a ſmall retinue flying from his Son *Abſalom*; his Guards about him being then ſo ſmall and inconſiderable, that *Shimei* thought, he might ſafely vomit out his rancour, and fury, againſt him: In all which, and the like, actions, God derogates nothing from his Juſtice; theſe Occaſions, which God Preſents, being in themſelves harmleſs, though wicked men abuſe them.

And this may ſuffice for the Second thing I was to ſhew you; namely How and When God, without any impeachment to his Juſtice, may be ſaid to Harden the Heart.

I Proceed now to ſhew you,

THIRDLY, What are the Properties of a Hard Heart; and the FIRST Property of a Hard Heart is this, that it doth not yield to any means of grace; For,

Firſt, It cannot be prevailed upon by the word of God, which is a Powerful Agent; the Preacher that ſpeaks to obdurate Sinners, ſpeaks to Rocks, rather than Men; the Earth will ſooner tremble than they;

Illis Robur & Æs triplex circa pectus.

Their Hearts are ſo guarded with the Armour of Obduration, that the Word of God, though it be a two-edged Sword, cannot enter into them: Though God hath ordained a Function of men, by whom he does beſeech them; though he arms holy

their Meſſages, and Doctrines, with ſuch Terrors, as makes the very Devils tremble, and joyns his holy Spirit too, ſends him in tongues of Fire, that he alſo may preach to them; and fright them with more flame; yet Hardned Sinners break theſe Strengths, and vanquiſh all the Arts and Strivings of the Almighty; and though Gods Ambaſſadours flaſh Hell fire againſt their Vices, in torrents of Scripture threatnings and Comminations, they concern themſelves no more, than they would at the ſtory of a new eruption of *Ætna* or *Veſuvius*; their Hearts are turned into Stone, into pure Mine and Quarry; and thereupon ſuch, as Preach to them, may be ſaid to be *damnati ad Metalla*, (that old *Roman* Puniſhment) condemned like ſlaves to dig in theſe Mines and Quarries: So that as *Cato Cenſorius* paved the Courts of Judicature with ſharp ſtones, that men might not delight in Law-ſuits; So the Courts of the Lords Houſe are often paved with Hard Hearts, that the Preacher might be diſcouraged from Preaching. There is ſo much Ice in mens hearts, there hath been ſo long a winter in their affections, which are chill and dull to all goodneſs; that the word of God, which is ſaid to be * A FIRE, cannot thaw or melt them: And as a hard heart cannot be prevailed upon by the word of God; So neither

* *Jerem.* 23. 29.

Secondly, Will it be wrought upon by Gods good Spirit; for, though it cannot hinder the grace of Spirit;

God from ſhining upon it, yet it may, and often does hinder the workings and Operations of that grace; and receives the grace of God in vain; * *Heb.* 10. 29. and * DOES DESPIGHT TO THE SPIRIT OF GRACE, and abuſes, and * *Jude.* 4. *TURNS THE GRACE OF GOD INTO WANTONNESS.*

It was ſtrange that Chriſt when he was upon Earth Converted ſo few; the Evangeliſt wonder'd at it, *John* 12. 37. *THOUGH HE HAD DONE SO MANY MIRACLES AMONG THEM, YET THEY BELIEVED NOT IN HIM. BUT* he ſatisfies the wonder, and gives the reaſon of it out of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, *THEREFORE THEY COULD NOT BELIEVE, BECAUSE THEIR HEARTS WERE HARDNED:* Their Hardneſs was the cauſe of their ſmall progreſs in believing; Engravers upon ſtone cannot rid much work; they that Point and Poliſh *Diamonds*, uſe much grinding to wear away a little unevenneſs. And then

* Ἐσκλήρυνε δὲ αὐτὸν τῇ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ τῇ τῆς τιμωρίας ἀναβολῇ.

Thirdly, The hard heart will not be wrought upon by the mercy of God; God's Mercy to *Pharaoh* hardned his Heart; * *HE HARDNED, HIM BY HIS MERCY AND FORBEARANCE BY RESPITING HIS PUNISHMENT*, ſaith St. *Baſil.*

The Hardned Sinner ſhrowds his Sins under the wings of Gods mercy; He makes Gods mercy his Protection in Sin: Accuſtomed dangers eſcaped harden the Sinner oftentimes to a Stupidity: The ruder Marriners, that have weathered out ſeveral ſtorms will ſteal, blaſpheme, and be drunk, in the

the next tempeſt: And *Dion Caſſius* tells us, that *Catiline* being accuſed for the murders, and rapines, committed on thoſe, whom *Sylla* had proſcribed, and eſcaping the condemnation, under which others fell for the ſame Crimes, * DID FROM THIS GROW MUCH WORSE: The Hardned Sinner COMMITS the Attributes of God, and (as it were) raiſes a Conteſt and Diſpute between them; and to all declarations of his future Juſtice, he oppoſes that God is mercifull; that ſatisfied with his own rectitude, he deſcends not to mark mens follies; and thus he baffles Gods Veracity with his Clemency, and makes his long-ſuffering wear out the ſenſe of his Juſtice: How far ſuch fooliſh Collections as theſe will prevail to harden mens hearts, the Wiſe man tell us *Eccles.* 8. 11. BECAUSE SENTENCE AGAINST AN EVIL WORK IS NOT SPEEDILY EXECUTED, THEREFORE THE HEARTS OF THE SONS OF MEN ARE FULLY SET IN THEM TO DO EVIL: Such is the hard-hearted Sinners miſery, that God cannot look friendly upon him, but by his too much preſuming upon it he ruines and undoes himſelf: Heavens ſhining and ſmileing hurts him more than its lowring; the longer the Hardned Sinner looks upon the Sun of Gods mercy he gathers the more ſpots, and impairs the beavty of his Soul: God is forced to be a tyrant to obdurate Sinners; He muſt be always whipping and ſcourging them; and till they are mollified and bettered by ſtripes, He cannot in mercy remove

* Ἐκ τουτου χείρων πολυ ἐγένετο.

remove his rod: His taking away his plagues from them would be a greater Plague to them. And then

Fourthly, A Hard Heart cannot ſometimes be wrought upon by Gods Judgments: As Gods mercy cannot draw it, ſo his Judgments cannot drive it from Sin. It is an inſenſate unrelenting Anvil to the heavieſt ſtrokes of the Divine Vengeance: It does (like the *Roman* Emperour *Caligula*) ἀντιβροντᾶν thunder back againſt God, and ſhoot up a ſin, a provocation, againſt Heaven, for every arrow of Judgment ſhot down from Heaven; It undervalues Gods Power; Hector's and Braves his Omnipotence; it continues to affront God to his face after all his Judgments, as if he had waſted all his thunderbolts, emptied his Quiver, and broke his Sword in the laſt encounter, and were like thoſe poor Animals, who loſe their ſting in the firſt wound they give. He that ſhould have ſeen the Tragical iniquity we read of, in the City of *Lyons*, which was ſo viſited with the Peſtilence, that the Dead (without a Figure) buried their Dead, falling down one upon another, each being at once both a Carkaſs and a Grave; He, I ſay that ſhould have ſeen this, and obſerv'd withal, that the Souldiers daily iſſued out of the *Cittadel*, and deflowred Virgins, even whilſt they were giving up the ghoſt defiled Matrons even already dead, COMMITTING with the duſt, warming the grave with ſinful heats, and coupling with the Plague and Death; would certainly have been amazed, to ſee

men

men ſo hardned in ſin, as to Suffer and Sin together: And thus much for the Firſt Property of a hard heart, that it does not yield to any means of Grace: *Secondly.* A

SECOND Property of a hard heart is this, that it hath no Feeling in it; it is inſenſate: It is obſerved in the Body, that the reſt of the ſenſes may be diſtempered and loſt, without much impairing the health of it, but only the Touch cannot, which therefore is called the SENSE of life; becauſe that Part, or Body, which is deprived of Feeling is alſo at deaths door, and hath no more life in it, than it hath reliques of this Senſe: So is it alſo in Spiritual matters, of all other Symptoms, this of a hardned Senleſneſs is moſt dangerous; and as the *Greek* Phyſicians are wont to ſay of a deſperate diſeaſe, Ὀλέθριον κάρτα λίαν, very, very mortal: A Man may not feel an aile and yet not be in health; and it is a good degree of health to know our diſeaſe; For if a Sinner grow once ſo hard and ſenſeleſs, as that no Phyſick, no means, will work upon that Body of death, that does encompaſs him, *Conclamatum eſt*, We may ring his Funeral knell; for, though he be alive, and in this world, he is dead to all Grace and goodneſs: If there be no remorſe, no grief, no diſlike of ſin, then woe be to us, this is *deſcenſus Averni*; the loweſt ſtair that leads to the Chambers of death.

I have read that, near the City of *Capena*, lay a ſtone of great note, which upon great droughts the People would bring into the City, and large

ſhowers of rain would preſently fall; but if we would be tenderly ſenſible of, and weep large ſhowers of penetential tears for our ſins; we muſt on the contrary, beg of God, to remove the ſtone out of our hearts, and give us a ſoft and tender heart, a heart of fleſh: And thus having deſcribed to you the Properties of a Hard Heart; it is high time I ſhould make uſe, of thoſe words of *Hipocrates* προσκατασκευάδω σοὶ μαλαγμάτων γίνεα; Furniſh your ſelves with all the Softning Plaiſters you can, which may either prevent, or remove, this Obduration: And this brings me to the *Fourth* thing I was to ſhew you; And that is,

Fourthly, By What means we may avoid this Hardneſs; And

Firſt, If you would avoid it, avoid groſs Sins; for they waſt the Conſcience, make havock of grace, and render the heart hard and callous: When *David* cut off the lap of *Saul's* garment 'tis ſaid, *his heart ſmote him*; but when he fell into thoſe foul ſins of Adultery and Murder, it is not then ſaid, his Heart ſmote him; it grew hard upon the commiſſion of thoſe groſs ſins, till God diſpatcht the Prophet *Nathan* to him, to rouſe and awake him. As for Sins of Infirmity, which are ſins of a leſs and imperfect Choice, ſome Paſſions blinding or corrupting the Judgment, they are entailed upon All; and, as the Schoolmen ſay, *Poſſibility of Sinning is included in the notion of a Creature*: But though all men are prone to Sins of Infirmty, and yet all mens Hearts are not ſo Hard-

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ned as Habitually to commit groſs and ſcandalous Sins; they have not ſuch vitiated Palats, as to be able to drink down the worſt dregs and lees of Vice: When *Conſcience ſaith to any perſon this is a Great Sin, Commit it not, and yet in deſpite of Conſcience, and the Checks it gives him, he will run on*; It is juſt with Conſcience, (when its Counſel is rejected) like *Achitophel*, to ſtrangle and ſtiffle it ſelf. And as we muſt abſtain from groſs Sins, ſo if we would avoid Hardneſs of Heart.

Secondly, We muſt be careful not to harbour any the ſmalleſt Sin, with ſatisfaction and delight: By giving way to little Sins, one after another, we are prepared and diſpoſed for greater, and our ſtrongeſt Reſolutions againſt them are broken; for though they be not ſnapt in ſunder at once, yet by this means they are untwiſted by degrees, and then it is eaſie to break them, one Thread after another: 'tis ſcarce imaginable of what Strength and Vigour one Sinful Action (be it never ſuch a Dwarf in our Eyes) is, to Procreat and beget more: for Sin is Prolifical and Fruitful; and, though there be no Bleſſing annext to it, yet it does ſtrangly ENCREASE & MVLTIPLY: There are certain Rudiments and Firſt Elements of Vices, in which men are firſt enter'd, & they advance gradually to more groſs and heinous Crimes.

Our *Saviour* reproves the *Phariſees* in the Goſpel, becauſe they would ſtrain at Gnats, and ſwallow Camels; but yet it is true, that men learn at length to ſwallow Camels, by ſwallowing Gnats at firſt.

* *Nemo repente fuit turpiſſimus.* * Juvenal.

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No Sinner is so adventurous, as to attempt the greatest Sins at first; the way by which men train up themselves to the committing gross and heinous Sins, is, by not making Conscience of committing less Sins; and yet, *I know not* (a) (saith *Paulinus* in *St. Jerom*) *WHETHER WE CAN CALL ANY SIN LITTLE, THAT IS COMMITTED AGAINST GOD*: Small Contempts against Great Princes are accounted great Crimes; for what is wanting in the thing, is made up in the Worth of the Person; How great a Sin then is the smallest Contempt of the Majesty of God? To which I may also add, that when a small Sin comes by Design, and is Acted with Knowledge and Deliberation, the Malice of the Agent heightens the smallness of the Act, and makes up the Iniquity. It is incredible how insensibly many small Sins heighten and inflame our Reckonings, and encrease our Spiritual Hardness: Oh then that we would * *TAKE THESE LITTLE FOXES*; * that *WE WOULD DASH THESE BABYLON's BRATS AGAINST THE WALLS*. And this brings me to the *Third* Remedy against Obduration, and that is;

(a) Nescio an possimus leve aliquod peccatum dicere quod in dei contemptum admittitur.

* Cant. 2. 15.
* Psal. 137. 9.

Thirdly, To nip the forbidden Fruit of Sin in the Bud, before it grows into a Habit; *Ibi maxime oportet observare Peccatum ubi nasci solet*, saith St. *Jerom*; Observe, and Kill Sin in its infancy; Crush this Cockatrice in the Egg: The Tree, which was in the beginning but a small Plant, may at length bear

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its Head and Branches ſo high, as to caſt a moſt dangerous Shadow: Even the ſmalleſt Pullulations of Sin muſt not be neglected; the firſt Bloſſoms of Iniquity muſt be blown away; For Sin is of a growing, multiplying nature; there is uſually a Concatenation of Vices; one Devil brings ſeven other Devils; One Sin makes a Bridge for more to come over, like the Waves of the Sea, the End of the one is the Beginning of the other: If we go with Sin one Mile, it will compel us to go with it twain: It will ſwell like the Cloud *Elijah* ſaw, from the Bigneſs of a Man's Hand, to ſuch a vaſt Expanſion as will cover the Skie: No man deſcends to the worſt at firſt, but gradually, Step by Step; as Marriners ſetting ſail, firſt loſe the ſight of the Shore, then of the Houſes, then of the Steeples, then Mountains and Land.

Few or none are ſo hardned, and deſperate, at firſt, as to leap into Hell: *Alipius*, in St. *Auſtin*, who went only at firſt for Company, to thoſe bloody Spectacles of the *Gladiators*, came at laſt to applaud them: We know where we begin and ſet out in Sin, but we know not where we ſhall End, or take up; as no man can ſay, He will let in juſt ſo many Paleſuls of the Sea, and no more. *Stulta res eſt Nequitiæ Modus*, ſaith *Seneca*; 'tis a fooliſh, ridiculous thing for a man to think to ſet bounds to himſelf in any thing that is bad; or to hope to ſin by Rules of Art, and in Number, Weight and Meaſure.

Fourthly and *Laſtly*, If you would avoid this Hardneſs, uſe fervent and conſtant Prayer. Let us importune

portune God to cut the Thread of our Wickedneſs, that we may not ſpin it out to ſuch a length: Let us ſue out a Divorce between us, and our Beloved Sins, that Harden us. The Fire of Prayer muſt never go out, if we expect that ſuch Mettal as a Hard Heart conſiſts of, ſhould ever be melted by it.

Thoſe, who endeavour Chymically to extract the *Philoſopher's Stone*, muſt never let their Fire go out; and ſo thoſe, who would extract and draw the Stone out of their Hearts, muſt never let the Fire of their Devotion go out; this Fire (like that of the Veſtal Virgins at *Rome*) muſt be alway kept Burning. Now, that we may make an Experiment of this laſt *Recipe* of Prayer againſt Obduration, let us Begg of God to take away theſe Hearts of Stone, from within us, and give us Hearts of Fleſh, for his dear Son Jeſus Chriſt his ſake; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour, Glory, and Praiſe, both now and for ever.

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